

Scattergood Friends School and Farm
Farm Report to Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative
July 2015

On graduation weekend, busied by so much but mindful of a rare dry stretch in our otherwise wet spring, multi-tasking by dropping off students at an SAT test and picking up a carrot seeder from a friend at the Iowa City Farmers Market, I heard a story on National Public Radio about the Benedictine monks of Nocia, Italy who spend almost five hours of every day chanting as part of their faith practice.

After the story I turned off the radio and drove in silent glee and appreciation at living in a churning world that still harbors individuals and communities that work and worship on the boundaries. Just knowing that these monks (and many others) exist and are singing brought me hope and reassurance. I drove happily on. And then I realized that not only do I get to live in this world, I get to live and work in one of those places that redefine the possible. The Benedictine motto of "prayer and work" could easily apply to life at Scattergood, though prayer with teenagers may involve foosball, baking cookies or throwing a Frisbee. All members of the Scattergood community work hard, but we also find appropriate ways to honor creation and each other. Scattergood offers comfort, gives pause and brings hope in a world that undervalues these things. Scattergood sings its sacred life, challenged and inspired. And I am fortunate to live here.

So what song has the Farm sung this past year?

Student experiences continue to be our most important verse. All students once again took part in a Farm Work Day during student orientation and reprised the effort six weeks later to harvest loads of winter squash, carrots and mangels. Students also rotated on to two Farm Crews, and could choose from spring and fall Farm Projects as well as a Food Preservation Project. Many students sought Farm opportunities in addition to the weekday offerings and joined the weekend Farm Crews to shell popcorn, harvest potatoes and pumpkins, prune apple trees and bottle feed lambs and a calf. In the classrooms, Farm Science and Biology classes continued to explore the Farm, documenting various soil building strategies, erosion potential and livestock biology while Agricultural Research Class designed and carried out experiments in fodder feeding pigs, growing soldier fly larva for chicken feed and finding the optimal media for vermicomposting. A Humanities class studied farmland transfer by reading Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Mary Swander's *A Map of My Kingdom* (which premiered in the Hickory Grove Meeting House one year ago). A May Term class studied pollinators and constructed housing for wild pollinators and brought to the farm a colony of domesticated honey bees. We also celebrated two graduating seniors who earned their Sustainable Agriculture Concentration recognition by taking multiple Farm Projects, writing their Junior or Senior papers on a related topic, and most importantly to me, helped out with many of the day-to-day chores while Dana was gone on maternity leave.

In addition to learning experiences, the Scattergood Farm also produces food. Our greatest accomplishment grew largely from the addition of the new packing shed out on the Farm.

In our first year with a walk-in cooler and rodent-proof storage, we ate carrots, cabbage, beets, potatoes, rutabagas, and celeriac all year long. Sweet potatoes and winter squash supplies stretched nearly to March. This was in addition to our typical bounty from August until December when nearly every vegetable consumed at Scattergood comes from our land and our labor.

Once again, all of the meat consumed during the year came from livestock that lived out their lives on our land including nineteen hogs, three steers, eighteen lambs, and twenty turkeys. Many additional animals were sold to neighbors or at auction.

This production was done with a focus on ecological sustainability. We again received organic certification for our orchards and gardens, implemented a wide variety of cover-cropping strategies including a fallow year in our crop rotations, and we continued a six-year-long trial comparing fertility from plant and animal origins. We are also experimenting with transplanting crops into cut rye and we recently received funding from SARE (the USDA's agency of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) to add prairie strips throughout our gardens.

The Scattergood Farm does not just hum quietly to itself, however. Many groups and individuals sought out the farm to learn, observe and contribute. Visitors included three fifth grade classes from West Branch Elementary School, the 3rd/4th class from Willowwind School, Outdoor Adventures Summer Camp, Taproot Nature Experience, Summers-Knoll middle school in Ann Arbor Michigan, heroes from the Great March for Climate Action, SARE representatives from four different states, the USDA's Regional Farm to School Director, a science teacher from Wilmington Friends School in Delaware, stakeholders in a nascent Texas Agricultural High School, and our state Representative Bobby Kaufman. Many other guests also informally visited the farm including attendees of the 125th Anniversary Reunion, prospective student families, and many friends and families of current students. Wartburg College completed one pollinator study in 2014 and the University of Northern Iowa began another in 2015. Pesticide Action Network chose Scattergood as a drift catching site, and the farmers remains active with Practical Farmers of Iowa, Field to Family, and the Women Food and Agriculture Network. In addition to the SARE grant and PFI honoraria, we also received two small grants from the Iowa Ag Literacy Foundation, and we were published in the most recent Wapsipinicon Almanac.

Many people contribute their verse. The Scattergood cooks are often an overlooked part of the Farm team, but their ability to get teenagers to eat what the Farm produces is the most important part of our farm to school model. Christa Hanson returned during the winter to help with livestock chores when labor was particularly short. Ben Bowman has been a steady presence on the Farm, quietly keeping machines running smoothly and landscapes looking tidy. Elana Gingerich has provided temporary labor for our livestock program. Christine Ashley and Mark Shanahan each offered great support for the Farm during their time at Scattergood. Ken Fawcett and the Farm Subcommittee of the School Committee continue to contribute in many different ways. Though she will remain a presence at Scattergood and on the Farm, after six years as Livestock Manager, Dana Foster will be defining a new role for herself and she deserves much gratitude for keeping the program stable and students actively involved in the care of our animals.

I spend much of each day working quietly by myself, sometimes remembering to slow down and appreciate where I am and what I get to do. My work is my song and I try to sing it joyfully. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

Respectfully Submitted
Mark Quee
Farm Manager